

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Santa Ana Region

March 3, 2006

STAFF REPORT

ITEM: 7

SUBJECT: Appeal for an Exemption from the 30 Percent Maximum Slope Requirement for the Use of a Subsurface Disposal System – Ken and Pat Doyle, Ponderosa Drive, Idyllwild Area, Riverside County, APN 560-180-010-9

DISCUSSION:

On January 31, 2006, Barbara Acheson of Brubaker Culton Real Estate and Development, on behalf of Ken and Pat Doyle (property owners), submitted a request for a septic tank subsurface disposal system clearance. The owners are proposing to construct a home on a 0.21-acre parcel utilizing an on-site septic tank-subsurface disposal system in the Idyllwild area of Riverside County. There is no sewer available that could service the lot. The lot was created prior to 1989 and is not considered a new development subject to the Regional Board's minimum lot size requirement for septic system use. However, Idyllwild is a mountainous area of the region. The lot has relatively steep ground slopes and the slope in the disposal area is approximately 35 percent. This slope does not comply with the Board's "*Guidelines for Sewage Disposal from Land Developments*", but it does comply with Riverside County Department of Environmental Health guidelines.

In 1979, the Regional Board adopted "*Guidelines for Sewage Disposal from Land Developments*." These guidelines established minimum criteria for the use of individual disposal systems to prevent pollution or nuisance from discharges to leaching or percolation systems. These guidelines stipulate, in part, "*Natural or finished ground slope in the disposal area shall not be greater than 30 percent.*" When slopes in the disposal area are greater than 30 percent, the probability of sanitary wastes surfacing is much greater, thereby creating a threat of nuisance, pollution, and public health hazard.

At the time they were adopted, the Board's "*Guidelines*" were consistent with those implemented by Riverside and San Bernardino County Health Department. However, both Counties have since updated their requirements in several areas. Both health departments now allow the installation of septic systems in areas of up to 45 percent slope, provided certain conditions are met (e.g., the greater the slope, the deeper the leach lines must be installed).

Mr. & Mrs. Doyle are unable to find a suitable location on the property for the disposal system with less than 35 percent slope. Therefore, they are appealing to the Board for an exemption to place the proposed system in an area between 30 and 45 percent slope (35 percent slope). The system would be designed and installed in accordance with Riverside County Health Department requirements.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve Mr. & Mrs. Doyle's request for an exemption for this project for the use of an individual sewage disposal system, provided that the property owners obtain approval for the subsurface disposal system from Riverside County Department of Environmental Health.

Comments were solicited from the following agencies

State Water Resources Control Board, Office of Chief Counsel – Jorge Leon
Riverside County Department of Environmental Health, Indio – Jeff Johnson/Mark Abbott
Riverside County Department of Building and Safety – Steve Dondalski
Brubaker Culton Real Estate & Development – Barbara Acheson